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# STATE HOUSE

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STATE OF ILLINOIS



Although a rented building in Kaskaskia was the first "State House" from 1818 to 1820, the first Capitol erected by the State was in Vandalia, the capital city from 1820 to 1839.

The removal of the capital from Kaskaskia to Vandalia grew out of a mania for speculation, historians state, since it was believed by many that money could be made by starting a land boom in a new location. Accordingly Congress was petitioned, and four sections of land were granted the State providing that a town be laid out on the site and the State capital remain there for twenty years. The choice of the grant was limited to the Kaskaskia River, "as near as might be east of the third principal meridian on that river." The place selected by the Board of Commissioners appointed for the purpose was known as Reeve's Bluff, situated on the right bank of the river.

The site was cleared, named Vandalia and a two-story log "State House" was constructed. The State archives were hauled from Kaskaskia in a small wagon and on December 4, 1820, the first session of the Second General Assembly met here. The log Capitol was unsatisfactory, however, and did not provide office space for many of the offices. It burned during the third session of the General Assembly, December 9, 1823.

A brick building was completed in 1822 to house the State Bank and a number of the State offices. This building burned the following year with all the records except those of the Secretary of State destroyed.

In 1824 the townspeople of Vandalia, using the salvaged material from the burned Bank building erected the second State House. This remained the State House until 1836 when in an effort to keep the capital at Vandalia the townspeople again erected another unauthorized State House at a cost of \$16,000. The State accepted the building early in 1837, but a few weeks later the General Assembly by a joint vote selected Springfield to succeed Vandalia as the capital.

In 1837, when the struggle over the location of the capital was at its height, Vandalia supporters urged as an argument that while their city was metropolitan, it would be necessary in Springfield to live on venison, bear meat, and prairie chicken. This was not the case, but in Vandalia "hog meat" was plentiful, taverns dispensed imported vintages and living conditions, generally, were advanced as became the political and social capital of the State. Parties, dances and other forms of gaiety held sway while the Assembly was in session, and capital hostesses vied with each other in providing entertainment for the legislators.

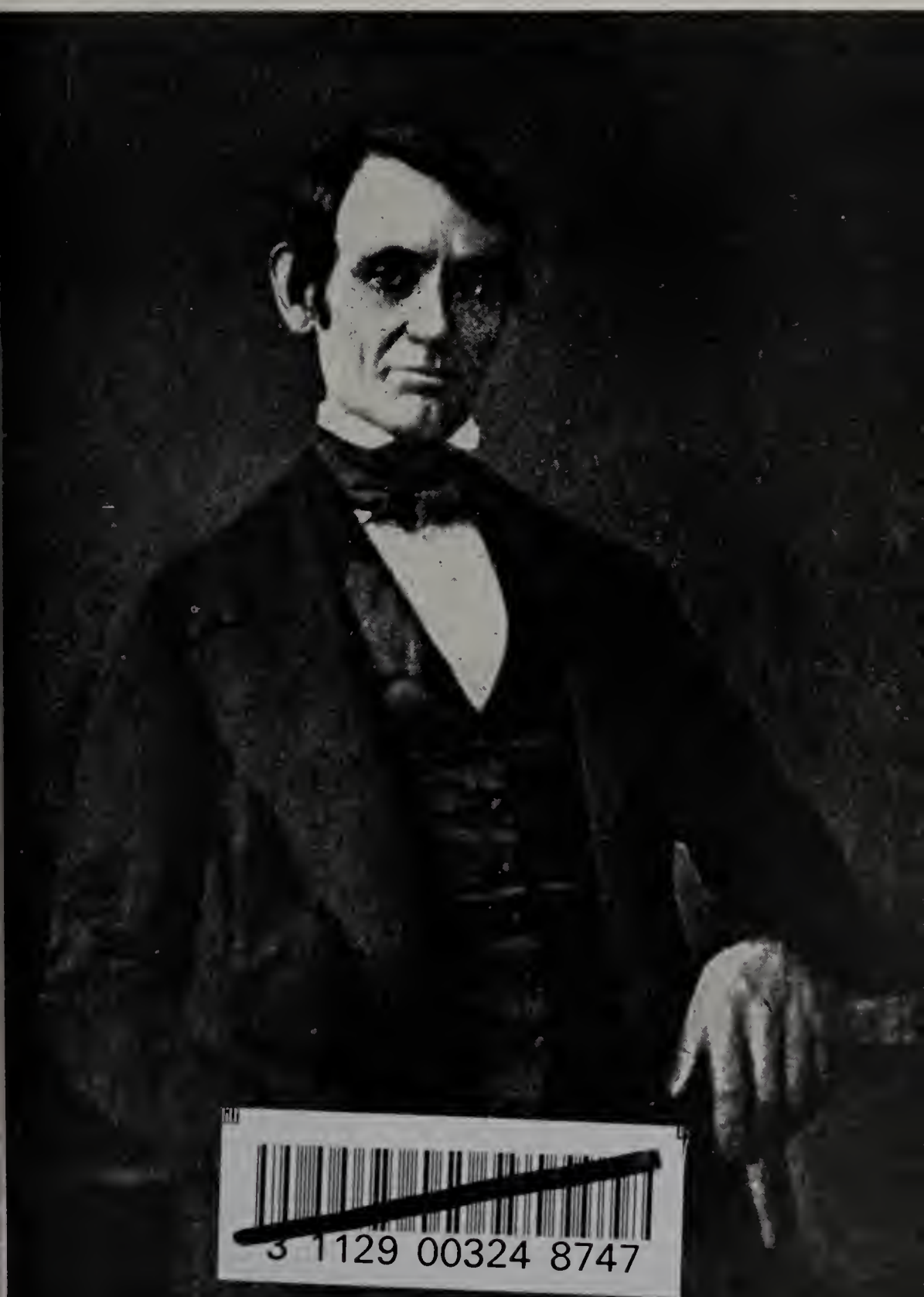
Enacted in the Legislature during these years were the first school laws of Illinois, the act incorporating the "town of Chicago," and the first internal improvement laws.



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Abraham Lincoln served in the Legislature, crossing the prairies between the Sangamon and the Kaskaskia on horseback or by stage. The recognized leader of the "Long Nine," two senators and seven representatives from Sangamon County averaging 200 pounds in weight, all six feet or more in height, Lincoln was largely responsible for the moving of the capital to Springfield.

On the corner of the State House ground is "The Madonna of the Trail," a monument to pioneer mothers, dedicated in 1928, a gift to Illinois and the Nation from the Daughters of the American Revolution. It is one of a series erected by this patriotic organization marking the National Old Trails Road through twelve states. Vandalia in the early days was the terminus of this highway, authorized by Thomas Jefferson in 1806, known as the Cumberland Road, later as the National Trail. Today Vandalia lies along U. S. Route 40.

- First known photograph of Lincoln taken in Springfield, 1846



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